

No Distance is Too Great

**Report of the Minister's Advisory Committee
on K-12 Distance Education**

June 22, 1992

**Prepared for the
SASKATCHEWAN MINISTER OF EDUCATION**

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

Honourable Carol Teichrob
Minister of Education

Dear Mrs. Teichrob:

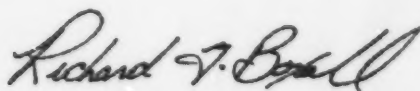
On behalf of the members of the Minister's Advisory Committee on K-12 Distance Education, we are pleased to forward our Final Report to you.

The Committee met for the first time in January 1991 to discuss K-12 distance education needs in Saskatchewan and to identify the role that distance education plays in a rapidly changing educational scene.

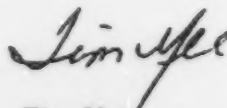
We believe that our report is comprehensive and that its 21 recommendations set directions for the future. We also include an action plan designed to facilitate effective implementation of these recommendations.

The Co-chairpersons and the Committee members, past and present, wish to thank you for this challenge. We remain at your disposal beyond the tenure of this Committee.

Yours sincerely,



Richard Boxall
Co-chairperson



Tim Yee
Co-chairperson

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Minister's Advisory Committee on K-12 Distance Education would like to thank the many individuals and groups who contributed to the development of this final report. A particular thank you to the individuals and groups who made presentations to the Committee. Their descriptions of how distance education touched their lives helped the Committee understand the many roles that K-12 distance education plays in this province.

Thank you to:

Campbell Collegiate, Regina

- E. Lynn Oliver, Manager of Distance Education Services, Saskatchewan Communication Network
- Dick Anderson, Teacher
- Randy McLeod, Teacher
- Students of an Algebra 30 distance education class
(on-site visit to interactive television instruction site)

College of Education, University of Saskatchewan

- Dr. Len Proctor
- Dr. Richard Schwier
(presentation concerning the educational applications of multi-media technologies)

High School C.O.R.E. Program, Regina

- Sheila McKague, Teacher
- Gordon Selinger, Teacher
- Two students
(presentation)

Kelly Hilkewich, Principal

Ogema School
(presentation)

Katherine Genest, adult student, Regina

(presentation)

Garth Gross

Hazenmore, Saskatchewan
(profile)

James Gunningham
Director of Education
Eston-Elrose School Division
(information about Picture Tel)

Dennis Lehmann
Canwood, Saskatchewan
(profile)

The students and staff of Loreburn Central High School
Loreburn, Saskatchewan
(profile and presentation)

Gary Luke, Director of Education
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Eastend, Saskatchewan
(presentation)

Bernice Lys
Saskatchewan Government
Correspondence School
(Secretariat, Minister's Advisory Committee on K-12 Distance Education)

Provincial Distance Education Association Annual Conference
(The members of the Minister's Advisory Committee on K-12 Distance Education submitted written questions to the individuals attending this national conference. They were given an hour and a half on the agenda where representatives from other provinces responded to these questions.)

Bev Raddysh
Coordinator
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Regina Correctional Centre, Regina
- One adult student
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(presentation)

Saskatchewan Government Correspondence School Staff

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 - Pat Eger, Course Development Supervisor
 - Sandra Lalonde, Teacher
 - Bernice Lys, Teacher
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- (presentation)

Mia and Scott Sutherland
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Wellington, New Zealand
(written presentation)

Loraine Thompson
Loraine Thompson Information Services Limited
(report writer)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Distance education is a mode of instruction in which the student and teacher are separated in time and/or space and where two-way communication takes place through nontraditional means for the most part.¹ That communication can occur through a variety of technical media including print, computer, fax, telephone, audiocassette, videocassette, broadcast television or narrowcast interactive television programming.

Distance education is widely used throughout the world to deliver educational programming. In some cases, it is the most efficient and economical way to serve students. In others, it meets the needs of students whose schooling must be independent of time and place. In Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan Government Correspondence School delivers grade 9-12 distance education programs directly. It also delivers K-8 distance education programming through a cooperative arrangement with the Correspondence and Distance Learning Branch of the British Columbia Ministry of Education.

PURPOSE AND MISSION OF THE COMMITTEE

The Minister's Advisory Committee on K-12 Distance Education was established in June 1990. Its purpose was to make recommendations to the Minister of Education on the role and needs of the Saskatchewan Government Correspondence School. The intent was to enable the Correspondence School to deliver a first-class K-12 distance education program for Saskatchewan students while enhancing opportunities for adult learners to complete their secondary education.

Early in its deliberations, the Committee formulated a mission statement. This statement appears below.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Advisory Committee on Distance Education shall provide the Minister of Education with recommendations for the future direction of K-12 distance education in Saskatchewan. Recognizing that distance education is an integral component of the provincial education system, these recommendations shall pertain to current clientele, future and expanded target groups, awareness, roles, function and needs for distance education generally and the Saskatchewan Government Correspondence School specifically.

¹ Definition from International Council for Distance Education.

KEY ELEMENTS

The Committee identified six key elements that provide a foundation for distance education. Each of these key elements – **flexibility, coordination, accessibility, affordability, visibility and integrity** has implications for **quality** of service and **equality** of service.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Committee developed five guiding principles. These principles provided a framework for all subsequent deliberations and for the formulation of recommendations.

The guiding principles are:

1. Distance education is predicated on meeting the individual needs of all learners.
2. Distance education is a legitimate and significant component of publicly funded education.
3. Saskatchewan Education, in conjunction with school divisions, is responsible for K-12 education in Saskatchewan and by extension, distance education. Given this mandate, all decision-making with respect to K-12 distance education rests primarily with Saskatchewan Education.
4. Teachers who are involved in distance education are an integral part of the distance education process.
5. The Saskatchewan Government Correspondence School, as a division of Saskatchewan Education, is given primary responsibility to serve locally determined needs of K-12 distance education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Twenty-one recommendations that flowed from the key elements and the guiding principles were identified by the Minister's Advisory Committee on K-12 Distance Education. A list of these recommendations is attached to this executive summary.

THE FUTURE

In order to ensure that the recommendations receive the necessary attention, the Minister's Advisory Committee on K-12 Distance Education proposed (Recommendation #21) the

establishment of an Implementation Advisory Committee consisting of representatives from major stakeholders. This Committee would be advisory to Saskatchewan Education.

Saskatchewan Education's first tasks should be to establish this Implementation Advisory Committee and address Recommendation #2, which states:

It is recommended that the Correspondence School, in cooperation with Saskatchewan Education, undertake a province-wide needs assessment to determine K-12 distance education requirements.

When addressing Recommendation #2, it is vitally important that Saskatchewan Education talk to present and potential users of distance education as well as distributing questionnaires and calling for submissions. After the Implementation Advisory Committee has been appointed and the needs assessment initiated, the other 19 recommendations in this report should be categorized into those that can be acted upon immediately and those that will be dependent upon the results of the needs assessment. Those recommendations that can be acted upon immediately should be addressed forthwith. As soon as the results of the needs assessment are known, the other recommendations should be prioritized and an action plan for their implementation should be developed.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

MANDATE

Page No.

Recommendation #1

32

It is recommended that Saskatchewan Education continue to recognize K-12 distance education as part of its mandate as recommended in the Directions report. Decision-making with respect to K-12 distance education should rest primarily with Saskatchewan Education.

PLANNING

Recommendation #2

33

It is recommended that the Correspondence School, in cooperation with Saskatchewan Education, undertake a province-wide needs assessment to determine K-12 distance education requirements.

Recommendation #3

34

It is recommended that the Correspondence School, in consultation with the other educational partners, based on the results of the needs assessment, take a leadership role in ongoing strategic planning for K-12 distance education in Saskatchewan. Authority for decision-making should rest with Saskatchewan Education after appropriate consultations with educational organizations, and delivery agencies such as SaskTel and the Saskatchewan Communications Network (SCN).

Recommendation #4

35

It is recommended that the Correspondence School, in collaboration with Saskatchewan Education and SCN, develop a long-term acquisition plan for non-print material to enhance print-based courses.

Recommendation #5

36

It is recommended that the Correspondence School, in collaboration with interested schools and agencies, develop a long-term plan for the delivery of courses enhanced by interactive television and broadcast on SCN.

ORGANIZATION

Page No.

Recommendation #6

37

It is recommended that the name of the Saskatchewan Government Correspondence School be changed to more accurately reflect the nature of the School's activities.

Recommendation #7

37

It is recommended that the Correspondence School, school divisions and consortia of school divisions form innovative partnerships to provide increased access to quality learning opportunities for K-12 distance education learners throughout the province.

Recommendation #8

38

It is recommended that distance education be used to support the needs of learners, not infrastructures which may no longer be viable.

Recommendation #9

39

It is recommended that a collaborative project be undertaken involving the Correspondence School, the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST), and regional colleges to explore program delivery and student support systems enabling adults to participate in secondary distance education.

Recommendation #10

39

It is recommended that the Correspondence School develop and implement an appropriate staffing plan in order to ensure adequate and effective delivery of K-12 distance education.

FINANCE

Recommendation #11

41

It is recommended that Saskatchewan Education, in consultation with its educational partners, review tuition fee structures for K-12 distance education courses and make recommendations to meet demands identified through the Correspondence School's regular planning cycle.

Recommendation #12 42

It is recommended that, based on the needs determined through ongoing research, the Correspondence School continue to receive adequate funding.

PROGRAMMING

Recommendation #13 45

It is recommended that development of K-12 distance education be done in concert with Saskatchewan Education's curriculum and instructional development.

Recommendation #14 46

It is recommended that the Correspondence School continue ongoing evaluation of K-12 distance education courses in order to ensure their quality and effectiveness.

Recommendation #15 46

It is recommended that as the Correspondence School conducts its ongoing evaluation, determinations be made concerning the implementation of media/technology enhancements for improvements to quality.

Recommendation #16 48

It is recommended that the Correspondence School ensures its programs are developed with sufficient flexibility in delivery modes so as to meet the needs of students and the unfolding needs of the K-12 education system in Saskatchewan.

COMMUNICATION

Recommendation #17 49

It is recommended that the Correspondence School undertake an ongoing program of public awareness to increase appreciation of distance education as a viable alternative for acquiring K-12 credentials.

Recommendation #18

49

It is recommended that Saskatchewan Education take a leadership role with the other educational partners in increasing public awareness of K-12 distance education as a means of providing equal access to quality learning opportunities throughout the province.

Recommendation #19

50

It is recommended that the teacher education programs at Saskatchewan's teacher education institutions include treatment of the principles and policies of distance education.

FACILITY**Recommendation #20**

51

It is recommended that a more appropriate facility be provided for the Correspondence School in order to make its operation more effective and efficient. This facility should support the unique status of the Correspondence School in its form and function.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE**Recommendation #21**

52

It is recommended that Saskatchewan Education implement the recommendations in this report as soon as possible and that it appoint an Implementation Advisory Committee to assist in this process.



Chapter 1

BACKGROUND TO DISTANCE EDUCATION

- Louise and Peter's parents are medical personnel. They have agreed to go to South America for a year to work at a charitable mission and want to take their children with them. Louise and Peter register for a full load of classes with the Saskatchewan Government Correspondence School.
- A group of five students in an urban high school are discussing a tricky point in the Economics course they are taking from the Correspondence School. The teacher from their school who is responsible for supervising them sits in on half their conversation and asks some questions that make them think even more.
- George graduated from grade 12 about six years ago. He has been working in a trade but now wants to go to university to study engineering. He discovers that he lacks Physics 30, Algebra 30 and Geometry/Trigonometry 30, all prerequisites for the program he wants to take. He registers with the Saskatchewan Government Correspondence School so that he can take the courses he needs one at a time.
- While her children are sleeping, a young homemaker listens to an audiocassette that is part of the English 30A and 30B distance education courses that she is taking from the Correspondence School. She has one more course to go after these two and then she will have completed the requirements for a high school diploma.

All of these students are learning through distance education. For many of us, the word "education" brings a vision of students in a classroom interacting with each other and with a teacher. Indeed, that is one very important way that K-12 education is delivered. But education is not confined to a single room or institution or method of delivery. Hundreds of thousands of students all around the world study through distance education.

In many of these locations, distance education is used to deliver university, technical and continuing education programs as well as K-12 instruction.

Distance education is a mode of instruction in which the student and teacher are separated in time and/or space and where two-way communication takes place through nontraditional means for the most part.² That communication can occur through a variety of technical media including print, computers, fax, telephone,

² Definition from International Council for Distance Education.

audiocassette, videocassette, broadcast television or narrowcast interactive television programming.

The Minister's Advisory Committee on K-12 Distance Education considers the key elements of distance education to be **flexibility, coordination, accessibility, affordability, visibility and integrity**. A few examples of the implications that each of these key elements have for **quality** of service and **equality** of service are given below. The examples are illustrative only and are not exclusive, comprehensive or exhaustive.

KEY ELEMENTS

	QUALITY	EQUALITY
FLEXIBILITY	Counselling, advising and instructional support shall be provided by qualified instructors.	Distance education learning opportunities shall be developed in a variety of formats and delivered on flexible schedules.
COORDINATION	Administrative and instructional responsibility shall reside in Saskatchewan Education and the Correspondence School.	Programs shall be offered throughout the province in traditional and nontraditional settings in collaboration with community educational institutions.
ACCESSIBILITY	Instructional support shall be available in communities, and instruction will be delivered in several formats.	Every qualified resident of the province shall have access to courses, regardless of location or need.
AFFORDABILITY	Quality of instruction shall primarily determine the parameters of course development.	No resident of the province shall be denied access to appropriate learning materials or instructional support because of cost.
VISIBILITY	Course materials have considerable visibility throughout the province and are subjected to scrutiny by many students, teachers and parents. Therefore, they shall be of the highest quality.	Courses shall be marketed throughout the province to traditional, nontraditional and community settings.
INTEGRITY	The highest standard for development and delivery of distance education shall be adopted.	All materials shall be sensitive to issues of race, gender, dignity and basic human rights.

Distance education has been used world-wide for generations and continues to be an important means of delivering education. For example, the New Zealand Correspondence School has approximately 20,000 students. Some of these students live in isolated areas

many hundreds of kilometres from the nearest school. Indeed, some never set foot in a regular classroom until they leave home for post-secondary education. But even in New Zealand, about half the students of the Correspondence School live in cities. Their local school may not offer the courses they need, they may be prevented from attending school by illness or pregnancy, or they may be adults who wish to finish their high school education while balancing family and job responsibilities.

Britain's Open University, a distance education institution, has become recognized for the excellence of its programs. The Open University was a pioneer in the delivery of post-secondary education through distance education.

In some parts of the United States, distance education is increasingly being seen as a way of delivering quality education when faced with obstacles such as declining and shifting student enrolments, geographic isolation and difficulty in recruiting teachers to work in remote areas. In the past, some approaches used to solve these problems have included school district consolidation, travelling teachers, and financial incentives for teachers. However, there are limits to the amount of time that students can be expected to ride on a bus, limits to the financial incentives that can be provided to encourage teachers to work in remote areas, and limits to the money and energy that can go into retaining traditional classrooms in remote communities or in communities with very few school-aged children. At some point, it becomes necessary to consider entirely new models for delivering education rather than just modifying traditional models. Distance education is such a new model.

In a country like Canada, with its vast distances and areas of sparse population, distance education has great potential. The federal government recently published a discussion document titled Learning Well ... Living Well³ which emphasizes the need to develop a learning culture in Canada. In a learning culture, the values of education are prized for their cultural benefits and also for their impact on individual incomes and national prosperity. Distance education is mentioned in Learning Well ... Living Well, as one of several factors that might contribute to development of a learning culture. It is noted that as part of an effort to encourage efficiency in the total system, countries such as the United Kingdom and Australia are making use of new approaches to the delivery of educational programs including open learning and distance education.

Distance education is one component of a system based on the principle of life-long learning. In such a system, learning for most young people between the ages of 16 and the mid 20s would consist of structured mixes of learning in classrooms, at home (including self-study and distance education) and in work experience. Learning Well ... Living Well further notes that in a fully developed life-long learning system, users will have a number of learning alternatives. A few of these alternatives are colleges, private trainers and distance education delivered via television or other media.

³ Learning well ... Living well: Draft discussion paper for pre-consultation meetings. (1991). Ottawa: Government of Canada.

A second major report also recognizes the importance of distance education. The Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Canadian University Education⁴, Stuart L. Smith, Commissioner, discusses distance education within the context of university education. It says:

33. *Existing distance education efforts are excellent and need to be expanded. Governments should recognize the enormous value inherent in distance learning and provide adequate support, including graduate courses where appropriate.*
34. *As with continuing education, professors who organize successful presentations for distance learning should be given the recognition they deserve and should be able to utilize these accomplishments for full value when seeking tenure, promotion or merit pay.*
35. *Provincial education television networks should form a consortium to create a constantly updated series of video presentations, useful both for broadcast and for home study via VCR. The universities involved in distance education should form a similar consortium in order to plan and organize the material for these video presentations. Products would fit into course offerings at several universities and production tasks would be divided among the networks. A fund for that purpose should be created with money coming from both levels of government. Programs designed and produced in this way will be useable in other countries where English or French is spoken. Such export sales would bring both funds and prestige to participating Canadian institutions.*

⁴ Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Canadian University Education, Stuart L. Smith, Commissioner. (1991). Ottawa: Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada.

THE BEGINNING OF THE SASKATCHEWAN GOVERNMENT CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOL

The Saskatchewan Government Correspondence School has been providing educational programming through distance education since 1925. In that year S. J. Latta, Minister of Education, announced the opening of the Outpost Correspondence School.

The establishment of the school was largely the result of efforts by Miss Catherine Sheldon-Williams. Since 1920, Miss Sheldon-Williams had been conducting an unofficial "school by mail" as a follow-up program for youths released from a boys' detention home at which she taught from 1915 to 1920. She campaigned vigorously for an official correspondence school.

In an effort to equalize opportunity for all Saskatchewan residents, the Outpost Correspondence School offered various courses to cover the eight public school grades. There was no charge for tuition or readers. Not surprisingly, Miss Sheldon-Williams was appointed teacher in charge. For the first two years she was the only staff member. She prepared lesson sheets for each student and did her own typing and clerical work. The number of students served by the Outpost Correspondence School and the number of teachers gradually increased and, in 1930, the school was reorganized to become the Saskatchewan Government Correspondence School.

The program of the school expanded over the years. In 1930 it began to deliver grade 9, 10 and 11 courses and in 1940, grade 12 courses. The Saskatchewan Government Correspondence School was a pioneer in the use of technology to deliver education programs. In 1931, the School began to produce radio programs as lesson supplements for broadcast, free of charge, on all Saskatchewan radio stations. In 1972 the School began to use audio-cassettes in language instruction.

Table 1 Type A Enrolments, Type B Enrolments, Saskatchewan Government Correspondence School - 1932-1992		
Year	Type A Student Enrolments	Type B Student Enrolments
1932	1,542	8,213
1942/43	1,753	7,662
1951/52	3,706	11,324
1961/62	4,258	721
1971/72	4,419	349
1982/82	6,328	326
1991/92	5,208	668

Note: Figures for 1932 to 1972 include both elementary and high school enrolments.

THE SASKATCHEWAN GOVERNMENT CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOL TODAY

PROGRAMS

Today, the Saskatchewan Government Correspondence School is a program delivery arm of Saskatchewan Education. In March 1992, 5,208 students were receiving instruction from the School. A staff of 33 provides instructional and support services to these students. The school offers more than 65 different courses from grades nine to twelve. These include courses in the required areas of study such as English, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Science. Courses that are electives in the high school program such as Algebra, Finance, French, German, Home Economics, Interior Design, Physics, and Ukrainian are also offered.

All courses consist of a set of printed lessons which in some cases are designed to be used in conjunction with a textbook. The lessons provide written instruction and students are expected to complete assignments of various types. Some courses include audiovisual support. For example, French, German, Ukrainian, English, Typewriting and Computer Literacy include audiocassettes. A few courses such as Typewriting and Calculus include videocassettes. Geography, Biology and Geology include slide kits.

The course materials (printed and audiovisual) are carefully designed for maximum educational benefit.

The small number of elementary students who wish to pursue their studies through distance education are served through a cooperative arrangement with the Correspondence and Distance Learning Branch of the British Columbia Ministry of Education.

The Correspondence School offers two types of student service. Students registered for Type A service receive full instruction. All lesson assignments are submitted to the Correspondence School for correction. In addition to marking the lesson, the Correspondence School teachers usually provide encouragement, feedback and additional instruction either in writing or on audiocassette. Type A instruction also includes a final exam and a provincial mark. Students registered for Type B service use Correspondence School-prepared lesson materials under the guidance of a local teacher who corrects all assignments and assesses achievement in order to determine the student's final course mark. The Correspondence School does not provide an answer key nor an examination service to students registered for Type B service. The majority of students registered with the School are enrolled in Type A programs.

In addition to these student services, the Correspondence School offers a teacher reference service. Teachers working in Saskatchewan schools who wish to use the courses as

professional teaching aids may purchase them. However, the School does not provide an answer key nor examination papers to teachers registered for this service.

Teachers in a variety of circumstances find distance education courses to be useful professional tools. Many teachers in small high schools are the only specialist in their subject area in the school. It is difficult to discuss technical questions related to their subject area with a colleague because the closest teacher who is also teaching their subject area is 30 or 40 kilometres away. For these teachers, distance education course materials are a silent, but very supportive, colleague. By examining the course, a local teacher can see how another subject specialist organized the concepts and ideas of the discipline, and how abstract concepts can be explained in ways that high school students can understand. New teachers and experienced teachers who are teaching in an area outside their subject specialization often find the courses useful for the same reason.

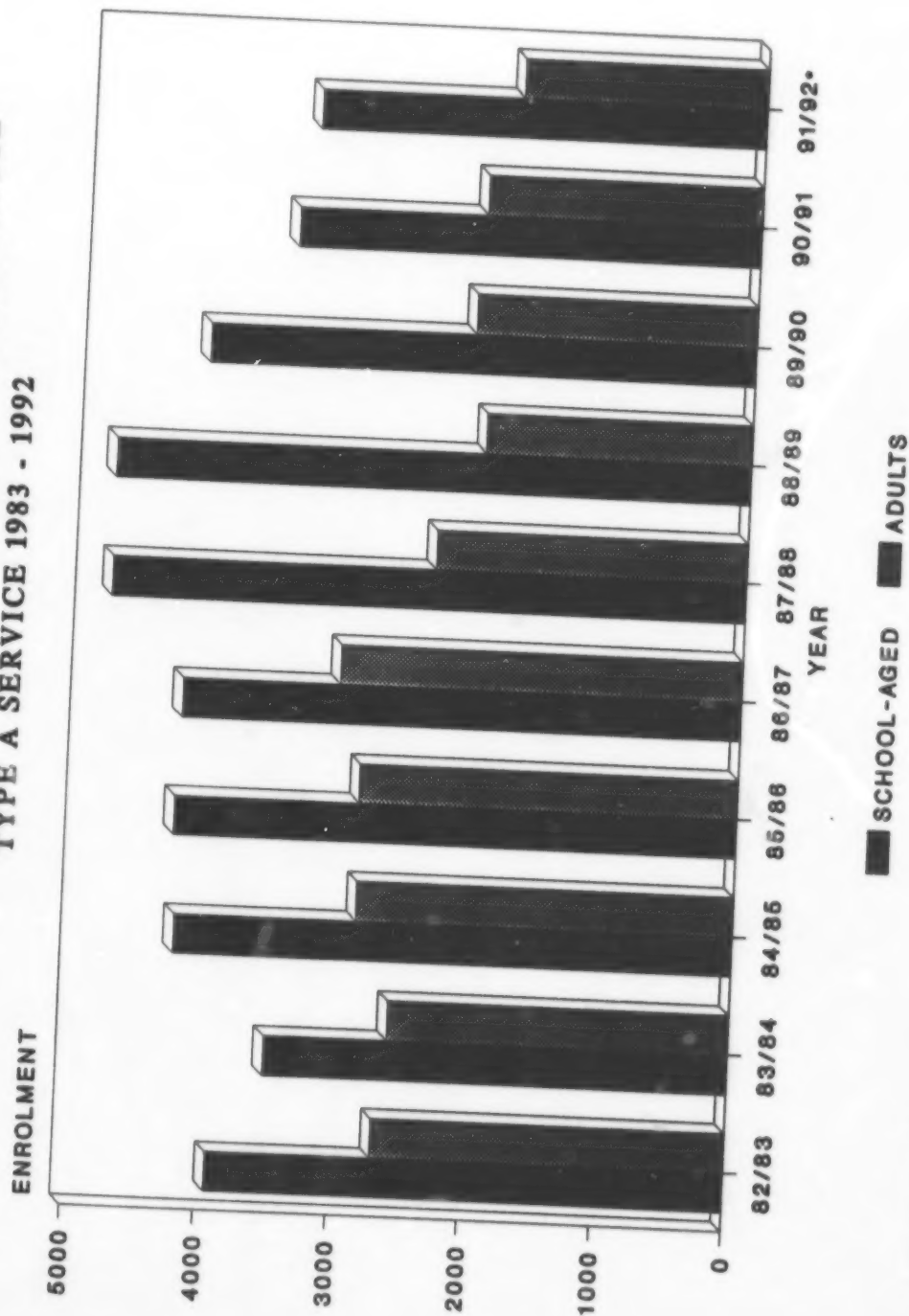
STUDENTS

About two-thirds of the students enrolled in the Correspondence School are school-aged and one-third are adults. Adults enrolled in the School include homemakers with young children, people with disabilities, shift workers, senior citizens, people who are in prison, residents who live temporarily outside the province, and those who live in remote areas as well as urban areas.

The School has an open entry system that is universal in scope. There are no quotas on numbers and no restrictions regarding sex, race, age and personal circumstances. The only restrictions are that students must be Saskatchewan residents and where applicable have the necessary prerequisites. Students come from both urban and rural areas of the province.

Many small high schools have limited staff and resources and find it difficult to meet diverse student interests and abilities. This is particularly true at the secondary level where a large number of courses might be offered. Although this problem is more severe in rural Saskatchewan because students usually do not have the option of attending another school in the area, it is by no means restricted to rural schools. Urban schools, too, are not always able to offer a full range of courses at the high school level. For example, some schools offer special programs such as those for pregnant adolescents or for students who have dropped out of the conventional school system. These special programs usually have small enrolments and may not have enough teachers to offer elective courses. In these situations students take the courses they need through the Correspondence School.

FIGURE 1
ADULT AND SCHOOL-AGED ENROLMENTS
SASKATCHEWAN GOVERNMENT CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOL
TYPE A SERVICE 1983 - 1992



*(As of March 1992)

Table 2

**Saskatchewan Government Correspondence School
School-aged Enrolment (Type A)
Provincial K-12 Enrolment
1984 - 1992**

Year	Saskatchewan Government Correspondence School School-aged Enrolment	Provincial K-12 Enrolment
1983-1984	3,522	203,887
1984-1985	4,226	204,771
1985-1986	4,258	205,585
1986-1987	4,228	205,913
1987-1988	4,794	206,301
1988-1989	4,802	204,903
1989-1990	4,133	202,788
1990-1991	3,505	202,056
1991-1992*	3,370	201,547

* As of March 1992.

Adult students live in both urban and rural areas, although the largest percentage live in urban areas, where employment opportunities may be greater. Individuals come to the city seeking work, but find they may be underqualified for the jobs available. They register with the Correspondence School in order to raise their educational levels and thus enhance their job opportunities. Some adult students registered with the Correspondence School are enrolled in a post-secondary institution - university, Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST), regional college, or private vocational school. They have been accepted on the condition that they complete certain high school courses or improve their standing in certain courses. Distance education is often the means through which they accomplish this.

The following points can be made about the geographic distribution of Correspondence School Students.

- The great majority of both adult and school-age students live south of Prince Albert. The number who live north of Prince Albert is small.

- The School has students in more than 450 communities in Saskatchewan. It does, indeed, serve virtually every community in the province.
- The majority of adult students live in urban areas. The number of school-age students who live in urban areas is large, but is not the majority.
- In most rural communities, there are usually one or two adult students and several school-age students. This suggests that the adult students are working alone but that the school-age students are working in groups as part of their regular school program.

As Table 3 shows, student enrolment goes up with each grade level with the largest enrolment at the grade 12 level. There are significant differences between adult and school-age enrolments, however. At the grade 9, 10 and 11 levels, school-age enrolments are considerably higher than adult enrolments. At the grade 12 level, the situation is reversed and adult enrolments are greater than school-age enrolments.

Table 3 Enrolment of Adult and School-Aged Students by Grade Level Saskatchewan Government Correspondence School 1986 - 1991					
Year		Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
1985/86	Adults	127	526	602	1,608
	School-Age	653	1,393	1,118	1,094
1986/87	Adults	160	487	655	1,739
	School-Age	443	1,392	1,221	1,172
1987/88	Adults	134	441	514	1,264
	School-Age	541	1,694	1,313	1,246
1988/89	Adults	109	329	443	1,131
	School-Age	543	1,671	1,239	1,349
1989/90	Adults	90	285	428	1,321
	School-Age	505	1,408	1,058	1,161
1990/91	Adults	72	238	430	1,336
	School-Age	416	1,228	912	949

DELIVERY OF PROGRAMS

Print is only one of many ways that distance education programs can be delivered. A wide range of technologies can be used. The technology actually selected for any specific

course or project depends upon the nature of the subject material, the geographic distribution and needs of the potential clients, the location and distribution of hardware and clients' access to that hardware. Recently, the Correspondence School has participated in two projects that involve the use of technology to deliver distance education programs.

The Correspondence School/SCN Project

In 1990/91, the Correspondence School in cooperation with the Saskatchewan Communications Network (SCN) and three production sites, televised several courses using the interactive television instruction mode. The production sites were Swift Current Comprehensive High School, Viscount Central School and Campbell Collegiate, Regina.

At the core of the program was a printed package of instructional materials and assignments developed and distributed by the Correspondence School. These independent study materials were supplemented by approximately twenty-four hours of interactive television instruction broadcast from production sites over the SCN narrowcast network. Teachers at the production sites did the actual instruction. At the beginning of the project, teachers from the Correspondence School travelled to the production sites to meet with the local teachers who were to do the instruction. Together they decided on an outline and content to be delivered. While teachers at the production sites presented content on the network, teachers at the Correspondence School received and worked on the distance education lessons completed by the participating students. Lesson assignments were transmitted by facsimile machine so that prompt feedback could be provided. Throughout the process, three-way communication was maintained between production, receiving and Correspondence School sites.

Feedback from those participating in the program was generally very positive. Teachers and school administrators felt that it was one means of delivering quality programming in these times of shrinking budgets and declining enrolments. Students liked working at their own pace and interacting with students in other parts of the province.

Teachers and students alike discovered that learning through interactive televised instruction is different from learning through regular classroom instruction. Teachers found that specific skills are needed to effectively deliver instruction via television and to assist students in the classroom. Students found that they needed to modify the strategies they use to learn.

The evaluation of the Correspondence School/SCN project also indicated that the local teacher makes a tremendous difference to the quality of students' learning experience. Interactive televised instruction has the most educational benefits when the local teacher assists students to develop the skills needed to learn through this medium, suggests ways that they might find answers to difficult questions, suggests sources of enrichment, and assists students to structure their time and develop study plans.

The Eastend Project

A cooperative teleconferencing project between the Correspondence School and Eastend School Division began in 1989 and is still ongoing. Students in Eastend School and three other high schools who are studying French 9, 10, 11 and 12, and students in Eastend School studying German 9, 10 and 11 are participating in the project. Printed instructional materials developed and distributed by the Correspondence School form the basis for the project. Students complete these lessons during regularly scheduled class periods under the supervision of a local teacher. During one out of every three or four scheduled periods, students are linked by speaker phone with their teacher at the Correspondence School in Regina who provides instruction and feedback. For teleconferencing, students are divided into groups of three or four so that they receive very personalized instruction.

Lessons are sent to the Correspondence School and returned via facsimile machine so that turnaround time is reduced significantly. They are marked by the same teacher who does the teleconferencing, so that students have both verbal and written interaction with their teacher at a distance.

The project has proven highly successful for two reasons. One is the rapport established between the classroom teacher and the Correspondence School teacher. These instructors form a teaching team, each assisting students in attaining the desired objectives. The second reason for the success of the project is the immediacy of the contact over the telephone. It provides an opportunity for instantaneous feedback, as well as a chance to establish good rapport between the students and the Correspondence School teacher. These two factors, verbal contact and personal rapport, are very important in second language learning. After the first lesson or two, students gain confidence and feel at ease thereby making second language learning easier.

SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

The Saskatchewan Government Correspondence School has three separate program areas - administrative, instructional and course development. The administrative function is important because it provides a foundation that allows the other two areas to operate smoothly. Every year, the administrative staff handles some 300,000 pieces of mail and arranges for the printing of about five million sheets of instructional materials. The administrative staff maintains files on all students and operates the computer system that records students' progress and marks.

The instructional program interacts directly with students. When students first register with the school, their instructors often call them to encourage them to begin the first lesson - the lesson that many students find most difficult to complete. As lessons come in, the instructors review them, providing written comments that praise, encourage or

constructively criticize. Typically, when an instructor is finished reviewing a lesson, it is covered with comments and remarks. In addition to providing written comments, instructors sometimes record comments on audiotape for students or telephone students to speak to them personally. Students are encouraged to come into the school to meet with their instructors whenever possible and to call them on the school's toll-free line.

Most of the course materials used by the Saskatchewan Government Correspondence School were written by teachers in the School using provincial curricula as a base. Writing a distance education course is a special skill. The writer must, of course, be expert in the subject area. Everything must be made very explicit because the student cannot ask questions the way that a student in the classroom can. All instructions and explanations must be very thorough. The School prepares several new courses each year. Because existing courses are reprinted every year, teachers have regular opportunities to make small corrections and revisions when needed. Courses to be developed each year are identified during the School's regular planning cycle. When selecting the courses that are to be developed, the School attempts to:

- meet Saskatchewan Education's implementation dates for curricula developed as part of the CORE curriculum
- be responsive to the needs of individual students and schools who use, or may potentially use, the services of the Correspondence School
- provide all required courses of study plus sufficient offerings in the specified and unspecified electives to allow students to meet the 24 credit requirement for high school graduation.

Course development has three phases:

- Pre-production
 - Identification of course to be developed
 - Identification of inservice and training needed for teachers writing courses and for pilot teachers
 - Research about resources available to support the course and needs of students
 - Selection of personnel to write the course (individual or team)
- Production
 - Writing
 - Illustrating
 - Formatting
 - Editing
 - Proofing
 - Printing
- Post-Production
 - Piloting (first year of implementation)
 - Evaluation (ongoing)
 - Maintenance (yearly revisions)

The Correspondence School teacher is central to the School's instructional and course development functions.

The job of a Correspondence School teacher is varied and complex. It is a job with three important emphases – interactions with students, local teachers and subject matter.

When a student registers for a course the teacher of that course usually tries to find out something about the student. The teacher may send the student a questionnaire or phone him or her. Knowing something about the student's educational levels and personal circumstances helps the teacher personalize instruction.

Teachers write most of their instructional comments on students' lessons and return the lessons to the students. Some teachers have prepared explanatory sheets that address specific problems and topics. Others tape record comments and suggestions for students. Most teachers make extensive use of the telephone – calling to encourage students or to respond to specific questions. When students are able to come to the Correspondence School in person, their teachers are always glad to see them. Sometimes it's just a friendly visit; other times the visit includes an intensive tutoring session.

Students' records are kept on computer in the main Correspondence School office, but teachers also maintain a file card on each student. They record the date that lessons are received and returned, and the grade the student achieved on each lesson. They also record any pertinent comments about the student's strengths, weaknesses and overall progress which may assist in working with that student.

Most Correspondence School teachers interact regularly with local teachers responsible for distance education programs. They advise local teachers on setting up programs so that students receive maximum benefit from their distance education experience. They provide information about subject content to teachers as well as students and suggest ways that local teachers can provide remediation or enrichment for those students who need it.

Increasingly, Correspondence School teachers are required to incorporate technology into their teaching. Virtually all use the telephone and fax machine to contact students. Some write scripts for audio and videotapes to accompany courses of study and some are involved in projects that use complex technologies to deliver instruction. In the years ahead, teachers' use of technology will almost certainly increase.

All teachers at the Correspondence School are also course developers. From time to time, they are relieved of their instructional duties so they can devote time to developing new courses in their subject areas. Each year, the teachers do a mini-review of existing courses in their subject area and update them as needed.

Most Correspondence School teachers report that their greatest satisfactions come from interactions with their students and from knowing that they've made a difference in

someone's life. In the words of one teacher, "What I like best is seeing students achieve their objectives, which usually are to get credit in specific subjects so that they go on to further education and receiving phone calls or notes from students, thanking me for the time, concern and attention that I have given them."

This report includes a number of profiles of people whose lives have been touched by distance education. These profiles have been included to show the varied nature of the client group to illustrate the interaction that is so central to the distance education process.

Loreburn Central High School

In the 1990/91 school year, students at Loreburn Central took 31 courses from the Correspondence School. The courses and the number of students taking each was:

Course	# of Students
Accounting 26	5
Accounting 36	1
General Math 10	1
General Math 20	4
General Math 30	5
Saskatchewan Agriculture 20	7
French 9	1
French 10	2
English 9	1
Business Records 16	1
Economic 30	1
English 10B	1
Science 10	1

There are a number of reasons why Loreburn has chosen to enrich its high school program by encouraging students to take distance education courses.

- Loreburn Central High is a small school with eight full-time teaching positions (staffed by 10 teachers) for a grade seven to twelve program. It doesn't have the staff to offer a wider range of programs. For example, it cannot offer both Algebra 20 and General Math 20. By cooperating with the Correspondence School, Loreburn is able to make a much wider range of programs and courses available to its students.
- Students can take subjects that are of special interest to them, but not necessarily to other students - for example, Accounting, Economics, Calculus or a language.
- Teachers do not need to pick up fringe subjects they know little about. When teachers have to work hard to stay one step ahead of the students it is a struggle for both teacher and students. Offering courses through the Correspondence School ensures that students are taught by subject specialists.
- Students who have failed subjects can make up those subjects and earn the credits needed for graduation. Timetabling problems encountered by small high schools often prevent students from doing this within the regular school program.

Loreburn Central High School (Continued)

When Loreburn Central High decided to make distance education courses a part of their program they designed the program in a way that would promote a high degree of student success. Features of their program include:

- The Board of Education pays the complete cost of each course. Their reasoning was that the Board pays the full cost for students enrolled in regular classes at the school, therefore they should pay the full cost for distance education courses as well.
- Distance education courses are built into the school schedule. Students have exactly as much class time for a distance education course as for a regular option. The reasoning was that equal class loads deserve equal time. The students all meet together under the guidance of Mr. Barnstable. He helps them with any questions they might have and, jointly with students, sets deadlines for completion of specific lessons. Mr. Barnstable also keeps records of all the lessons that have been sent in and the marks received. Both students and staff of Loreburn School feel that the success of their program is a credit to Mr. Barnstable and the effort he puts into it.
- Most of the textbooks needed for the distance education courses are supplied so students are saved the cost of a textbook.

Students and staff at Loreburn Central High have found that distance education has both advantages and disadvantages. The major disadvantage relates to student motivation. Even with supervision and pushing, some students still drag their feet. Distance education has many advantages, however. Students are learning responsibility by setting goals, learning on their own, establishing a work pace that will allow them to meet their goals and asking for help when they need it. Students are taking courses that they are interested in and have aptitude for, thus they are achieving greater success.

Loreburn Central High School's partnership with the Saskatchewan Government Correspondence School has had many benefits for students and teachers, alike.

Special Tutorial Class

1236 College Avenue - Regina, Saskatchewan S4P 1B1 • Ph. 791-8414

November 12, 1991

Mr. Steve Senyk,
Principal,
Correspondence School,
1855 Victoria Avenue,
Regina, Saskatchewan
S4P 3V5

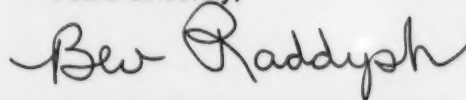
Dear Steve:

Thank you for the paper titled "A Distance Career Counselling Intervention Programme for Teenage Mothers and Pregnant Teenagers." As we have talked in the past about goal setting for this target population, this paper hits it head on. I plan to share much of the information from this paper with our Special Tutorial staff. Thank you for thinking of us by sharing this information.

We continue to enjoy a terrific working relationship with the staff of the Correspondence School. We are especially appreciative of the special circumstance considerations that your teachers give to some of our students. We appreciated your English teachers taking the time to visit with our students and to go over course expectations. All your teachers seem to go that extra mile for our students and are always very helpful when we make visits to your school.

Together we deliver education to a high needs group of teens and I look forward to our continued successful partnership.

Yours sincerely,



Bev Raddysh
Co-ordinator Special Tutorial

BR/jmck

The Special Tutorial Class is a program administered by the Regina School Division No. 4 of Saskatchewan for students whose attendance at regular schools is interrupted by pregnancy.

Chapter 2

THE INQUIRY PROCESS

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE COMMITTEE

Several factors led the establishment of the Minister's Advisory Committee on K-12 Distance Education. Perhaps the most important was Recommendation #3 of Directions⁵ which stated:

It is recommended:

That a variety of ways of delivering the core curriculum and elective courses be made available to Saskatchewan schools.

- *Alternative delivery mechanisms such as correspondence courses, modular course structure, and shared services should be expanded.*
- *Other program delivery mechanisms that involve use of new technology should be developed.*
- *Planning assistance and information on alternative delivery mechanisms should be available to school divisions.*

Four other factors which suggested that a review of K-12 distance education was timely included:

- The development of CORE Curriculum which has been ongoing in this province since 1984. CORE Curriculum has three components: Required Areas of Study, Common Essential Learnings and the Adaptive Dimension.

There are seven required areas of study within CORE Curriculum: language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, health education, arts education and physical education. Each required area has unique knowledge, skills and values that are essential for all students at the Elementary, Middle and Secondary levels.

The six Common Essential Learnings (C.E.L.s) are a set of interrelated areas containing understandings, values, skills and processes that are considered important

⁵ Directions: The final report. (1984). Regina, Saskatchewan Education, Curriculum and Instruction Review.

as foundations for learning in all school subjects. The six C.E.L.s are communication, numeracy, critical and creative thinking, technological literacy, personal and social values and skills, and independent learning.

The Adaptive Dimension refers to the concept of making adjustments in approved educational programs to accommodate diversity in student learning needs. It includes those practices the teacher undertakes to make curriculum, instruction and the learning environment meaningful and appropriate for each student.

- The establishment of a committee to review the implementation of CORE Curriculum and to set direction for the future.
- The existence of powerful new technologies and technological systems that might be used to deliver distance education.
- Continuing shifts in the province's demographics.

MANDATE OF THE COMMITTEE

The Minister's Advisory Committee on K-12 Distance Education was established in June 1990. Its purpose was to make recommendations to the Minister of Education on the role and needs of the Saskatchewan Government Correspondence School. The intent was to enable the Correspondence School to deliver a first-class K-12 distance education program for Saskatchewan students while enhancing opportunities for adult learners to complete their secondary education.

Without restricting the generality of this statement of purpose, the Committee was to consider the following items and make such recommendations with respect to policy direction as it deemed advisable:

- i) priorities for program development
- ii) requirements with respect to:
 - a) delivery modes and mechanisms
 - b) facilities
 - c) staffing
- iii) responsibilities of school divisions, SIAST and regional colleges with respect to distance education students pursuing secondary education.

THE PROCESS

The Committee invited approximately 20 individuals and groups whose lives had been influenced by distance education to make presentations. The purpose of these presentations was to provide the Committee with information about various aspects of distance education, not to advocate a particular course of action. The Committee wanted to talk to a cross-section of individuals and groups who learn through distance education and to individuals and agencies charged with the responsibility for delivering distance education programming.

The Committee visited sites in the province where technologically advanced distance education projects are underway and reviewed information about schools delivering educational programs through distance education in other provinces and other countries.

There was a review of The Saskatchewan Government Correspondence School's history, and an examination of its budget and of various statistics relating to the School's operation.

Throughout its deliberations, the Committee asked questions of itself and of others. Committee members tried to identify the major issues relating to distance education (and to the Correspondence School as a deliverer of distance education) and to explore these issues in some depth. Some of the questions that the Committee asked while grappling with the issues appear below.

Distance Education

Several educational organizations are involved in providing distance education. Is it part of the Committee's role to articulate how these various organizations might work together?

Does the Committee address the need for a central agency to coordinate distance education? for quality courses? for a standard delivery system?

Can distance education be a means of strengthening rural Saskatchewan?

Society is in transition. Can we foresee a viable structure for providing distance education that will serve well ten or twenty years from now?

Do we need new models for the delivery of distance education to individual students? to groups of students?

What role should distance education play in the overall educational system? What status should it have?

How can we provide site-based service – a place for adults to gather and talk through their problems?

What is the role of technology? Is there a danger of technology dominating?

Are we, in Saskatchewan, redeveloping what has already been developed and tested?

How do demographics affect distance education?

Does a perceived threat amongst educators and the public regarding distance education, in general, and the Correspondence School in particular need to be addressed?

Can adult basic education be delivered through distance education?

What has the term distance education come to mean?

What marketing strategies work best?

The Saskatchewan Government Correspondence School

Is the Correspondence School a school per se?

How can human contact be increased? Can technology play a role in this?

How can turn around time for assignments be reduced?

Are the needs of adult students different from those of school-age students?

How can the development of courses be speeded up without losing content integrity?

Are Type A and Type B services still viable?

How do we let people know about the School without creating unrealistic expectations?

What is the difference between distance education and the Saskatchewan Government Correspondence School?

Philosophically, what is the Correspondence School all about?

What is the role of schools who register students with the Correspondence School? of parents of Correspondence School students?

How can the Correspondence School improve its service to teachers? Should this be part of its mandate?

Client Groups

Who are the potential client groups for distance education in this province?

Should distance education programs and services be determined by the needs of the students or the needs of the system?

What groups presently use distance education?

What are the barriers to reaching all potential client groups?

Who are we serving?

Who are we missing?

Who are we not aware of?

How can we become aware of client groups?

How can distance education serve groups that lack literacy skills?

Demographic information indicates that Aboriginal people and seniors are two significant groups. Do they have needs that could be met through distance education?

Funding

Should the cost of distance education services be borne by the public tax dollar or by users?

If the Committee develops a plan, can that plan be financed?

Has restraint in financial support produced a decline in quality? What performance indicators would help those who make judgements about this type of educational activity?

Will an increase in the number of adult students present financial problems if the grant provided by Saskatchewan Education to make up for the difference between adult and school-age tuitions remains the same?

MISSION STATEMENT

Early in its deliberations, the Committee formulated a mission statement. This statement appears below:

MISSION STATEMENT

The Advisory Committee on Distance Education shall provide the Minister of Education with recommendations for the future direction of K-12 distance education in Saskatchewan. Recognizing that distance education is an integral component of the provincial education system, these recommendations shall pertain to current clientele, future and expanded target groups, awareness, roles, function and needs for distance education generally and the Saskatchewan Government Correspondence School specifically.

All of the subsequent activities of the Committee were selected to facilitate the Committee accomplishing its mission.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The guiding principles for K-12 distance education developed and adopted by the Committee emerged from recognition that distance education is an integral part of Saskatchewan's K-12 educational system. There are five guiding principles.

- 1. Distance education is predicated on meeting the individual needs of all learners.**

The student groups served by the Saskatchewan Government Correspondence School are diverse. Included are:

- students attending schools that are not able to offer the compulsory/optional high school subjects every year
- students with timetable problems
- pregnant teenagers

- students with physical disabilities or social/psychological problems
- individuals in correctional centres, penitentiaries and young offender centres
- students in special institutions/learning groups such as High School C.O.R.E. Program, White Spruce Youth Treatment Centre and the Bridging Program
- Saskatchewan students living temporarily elsewhere for example, students travelling overseas with their parents
- students expelled from regular school
- students who are being educated at home by their parents
- students who are members of Hutterite Colonies
- foreign students meeting university requirements
- adults (working and unemployed) seeking to complete grade 12.
- post-secondary students who require one or more subjects as a prerequisite
- senior citizens taking courses for interest or personal satisfaction.

The ages, needs, interests and personal circumstances of these various types of students are all different. The educational support available to them varies also. Some students may have access to a well-stocked resource centre and may be guided in their studies by a teacher in their school. Other students may not have access to any resources and may be working entirely alone. For all

The Saskatchewan Government Correspondence School fulfills different roles for different students. It is:

- an **alternative**, meeting the needs which the regular day school may not meet.
- an **enhancer**, providing academic courses and services in addition to the existing day school. It adds diversity to an existing program.
- a **contributor** to the educational expertise and quality of curriculum development in education. Students and teachers in Saskatchewan benefit directly from this expertise when they register with the Correspondence School or use materials developed by the School. Students and teachers in other provinces and other parts of the world benefit indirectly because the Correspondence School shares ideas and materials with distance education schools throughout Canada and the world.
- an **only option** for some adults to attain requirements for entry into post-secondary programs.
- a **resource** for teachers in the field.

those reasons, individualization is important. There is no "typical" distance education student.

2. Distance education is a legitimate and significant component of publicly funded education.

As Saskatchewan's demographics change, there is an increasing need for K-12 distance education. The school-age population in general is declining. Young people are continuing to move from rural to urban areas. Within urban areas there are shifts in the location of school-aged children as new suburbs are created and as the residents of established areas grow older. All of these factors mean that some schools are able to offer fewer electives because their enrolment and their teaching staff is growing smaller. More adults recognize the importance of completing grade 12 and seek programs that will allow them to continue working as they do so.

3. Saskatchewan Education, in conjunction with school divisions, is responsible for K-12 education in Saskatchewan and by extension, distance education. Given this mandate, all decision-making with respect to K-12 distance education rests primarily with Saskatchewan Education.

When making decisions about K-12 distance education, Saskatchewan Education may consult with the province's educational partners. Opinions might be sought from the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association, the League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents and the province's post-secondary institutions. When appropriate, technical information might be gathered from the organizations through which distance education is delivered including Canada Post, SaskTel, the Saskatchewan Communications Network (SCN) and video production studios.

4. Teachers who are involved in distance education are an integral part of the distance education process.

Many of the students taking classes through the Saskatchewan Government Correspondence School are enrolled in regular high schools, in alternate programs in regular high schools such as the Special Tutorial Program in Regina or in private high schools. Their own schools may be unable to provide a full range of compulsory and/or elective courses each year or the student may have a timetable conflict. In these situations, students work with a teacher in their local school as well as with a teacher at the Saskatchewan Government Correspondence School. The local teacher provides monitoring, feedback, encouragement, praise and constructive criticism. Completion rates for distance education students are much improved when students are given appropriate supervision at the school level. Research indicates that successful completion of the initial lesson assignments motivates students to complete the entire course. Assistance and supervision from a local teacher can help get students through their initial lessons and can provide the support necessary for continued progress.

Excellent instruction is at the heart of good education. Although the role of the classroom teacher is somewhat changed in a distance education program, it is still vital. Effective distance education means a partnership between teachers at the Correspondence School and classroom teachers. Distance education in no way replaces classroom teachers. Instead it gives them opportunities to form new relationships with other professionals and to reach students who otherwise might not be reached.

Teachers who work with distance education students at the local level need specific skills. Local teachers must be able to:

- assist students to organize their time. Most high school students are accustomed to being given daily assignments and deadlines by their teachers. Because they have always worked within a structure created by their teacher, they may not be able to estimate the time required for particular assignments. The local teacher works with distance education students to help them determine the time required for each lesson and to set realistic deadlines.
- facilitate communication between students and their teacher at the Correspondence School. Students initially are often timid about approaching the Correspondence School. When their local teacher encourages them to write, phone or visit their Correspondence School teacher in person, the student/teacher relationship flourishes and learning increases. Students may need help in formulating questions for their Correspondence School teacher. The local teacher can assist with this process by probing and paraphrasing until the student's question or problem becomes clear.

- add breadth and depth appropriate to students' age, interests and abilities. The local teacher might show a videotape related to the subject area, bring in a guest speaker, direct students to appropriate library resources or introduce puzzles and games that reinforce topics from the course.
- help students answer their own questions and solve their own problems. This is an important part of helping students become self-directed learners. When a student has a question that the local teacher can't answer, the local teacher might ask the student to identify a number of ways that the answer might be located. Looking it up in a reference book and asking a member of the community are two obvious ways. Next, the local teacher would ensure that the student has the skills to follow the most appropriate course of action. If asking a member of the community seems to be the best approach, the local teacher and the student might role-play the conversation that would take place, or the local teacher might ask the student to write out an interview guide prior to speaking to the community member.

As increasing numbers of teachers participate in distance education, issues such as professional workload, inservice and class size may arise and will have to be addressed.

5. The Saskatchewan Government Correspondence School, as a division of Saskatchewan Education, is given primary responsibility to serve locally determined needs of K-12 distance education.

Because the Correspondence School has primary responsibility for K-12 distance education in this province, Saskatchewan Education guarantees that all courses offered through the School meet provincial standards. All teachers are subject specialists and are certified to teach in Saskatchewan. Courses are based on the Saskatchewan curriculum and instruction is of a professional quality. Students who pass their courses receive official credit for them. School boards that use the services of the Correspondence School to meet local distance education needs can be sure that they are providing students with quality education.

Dennis Lehmann

Dennis Lehmann teaches Algebra and Geometry/Trigonometry at Canwood High School. He is also a student of the Saskatchewan Government Correspondence School.

Dennis has found that even the very best math students have difficulty with Calculus at university, without some preparation at the high school level. He makes a point of giving extra coaching to those students who know that their university program will include Calculus. In order to better assist these students he decided to take the Calculus course offered by the Saskatchewan Government Correspondence School. Although Dennis took Calculus when he attended university 23 years ago his knowledge has become a little rusty. He felt that the Correspondence School's course would be a good refresher.

This is the first contact that Dennis has had with the Correspondence School. He finds his course well designed, but very demanding. He is very pleased with the interaction that takes place between himself and his Correspondence School teacher. He says, "I get excellent written feedback on the lessons I send in and I'm on the phone to Rudy quite a bit with questions and problems." Dennis particularly likes the fact that he can call his teacher any time during the working day.

Mia and Scott Sutherland

Last year Mia and Scott Sutherland were living in the Yukon. Both had well paying jobs with the government, but both of them realized that they didn't want to be in those jobs on a long-term basis. Mia has always been interested in sports and fitness and felt that her future lay in the field of physiotherapy. Scott knew that to get the kind of job that he would like in the financial field it would be necessary to study business administration or commerce.

They decided to go to university in order to realize their goals. They investigated a number of universities in order to identify the programs most appropriate to their needs and finally settled on the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon. Both Mia and Scott have Grade 12, but both lacked the prerequisites for the university programs they wanted to take. For example, Mia lacked Algebra 30, Chemistry 30 and Geometry/Trigonometry 30 all of which are required for acceptance into physiotherapy at the University of Saskatchewan. As well, Mia had been out of high school for 8 years and Scott for 10 years and both felt that they needed to brush upon on their written English.

The counsellor who interviewed them at the University of Saskatchewan pointed out that the quickest, least expensive way to get the courses they needed was through the Saskatchewan Government Correspondence School.

Mia and Scott moved to Regina where they lived with her parents and both registered for a full load of courses (four courses per semester) with the Saskatchewan Government Correspondence School. In June of 1992 they will have completed their second semester with the School and will have all the courses they need to enter university in the fall.

Mia and Scott treat their studies like a job. They work from 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., five days a week and occasionally study an hour or two extra in the evening or on the weekend. Mia also works part-time in order to give herself a break from studying. Both of them get extremely high marks because they are highly motivated. It is essential that they do well on these courses if they are to achieve their long-term goals.

Mia's ultimate goal is to have her own physiotherapy practice. Scott is interested in finance with a bank; however, he too would eventually like to be self-employed.

Garth Gross

Garth Gross lives in Hazenmore, Saskatchewan and attends Kincaid School. He is in grade 12 and is taking five 30-level subjects. He is also taking Drafting 13 from the Correspondence School. Garth is taking drafting for several reasons. Last year he was thinking about studying engineering or architecture at university and knew that drafting would be useful in both these areas. His older brother took drafting a couple of years ago and Garth liked the work that his brother was doing. As well, Garth had a spare at school and decided to fill the spare by taking an additional subject. Because drafting isn't offered at Kincaid School, Garth enrolled with the Correspondence School.

Garth does most of the work on his drafting course during his spare at school, but sometimes takes work home if he feels that he is getting behind. One of the teachers at the school took drafting in grade 10 and 11 and at university and so is able to help Garth with any questions or problems that arise. Garth says that his drafting course is easy to follow, but that it requires quite a bit of work and great attention to detail.

During this year in grade 12, Garth's career plans changed. He decided that his future lies in the field of agriculture rather than in engineering or architecture. He has been accepted by the College of Agriculture at the University of Saskatchewan and plans to work toward a Bachelor of Science degree in agriculture. He doesn't know if his drafting course will be useful in his agriculture studies but says that even if it isn't, the course will have been worthwhile because he enjoyed it so thoroughly.

He also says that the drafting course has given him new ways of seeing things. For example, in drafting, objects can be depicted in two or three dimensions from a variety of perspectives. They can also be rotated in space. This means the draftsman is required to visualize the object from every angle. The ability to visualize and mentally manipulate objects will stand Garth in good stead in the future as it is useful in fields as diverse as sports, fine arts and engineering.

Chapter 3

RECOMMENDATIONS

Specific aspects of distance education and their implications for the Saskatchewan Government Correspondence School are discussed in the sections that follow. Recommendations are provided for each aspect. All of these recommendations are to be seen in the context of the key elements that appear in Chapter 1 and the guiding principles that appear in Chapter 2 of this report. The key elements are flexibility, coordination, accessibility, affordability, visibility and integrity. Each of them has implications for quality of service and equality of service as illustrated in the table on page 2.

MANDATE

Recommendation #1

It is recommended that Saskatchewan Education continue to recognize K-12 distance education as part of its mandate as recommended in the Directions report. Decision-making with respect to K-12 distance education should rest primarily with Saskatchewan Education.

The Education Act clearly specifies that K-12 education in the province of Saskatchewan falls within the mandate of Saskatchewan Education. Distance education is one of several different ways that the K-12 program can be delivered. The educational framework provided by CORE Curriculum, the course content and the Common Essential Learnings remain the same regardless of the method of delivery.

PLANNING

Recommendation #2

It is recommended that the Correspondence School, in cooperation with Saskatchewan Education, undertake a province-wide needs assessment to determine K-12 distance education requirements.

Every educational institution should do a needs assessment periodically in order to systematically identify its existing and potential client groups. A needs assessment also helps an institution identify the extent to which existing services are meeting the requirements of the field and new services which may be appropriate. An assessment of distance education needs at this time would be particularly useful for three reasons:

- The structure of the educational system in this province will change significantly in the years ahead. There will probably be further consolidation of schools and school boards, and available funding may decrease even further.
- The demographics of the province will change in the years ahead. It is likely that the following trends will continue:
 - population shift from rural to urban areas
 - increase in Aboriginal population
 - decrease in school-aged population generally, but increase in students of Aboriginal ancestry
 - increasing numbers of senior citizens.
- The needs assessments that the Correspondence School has done to date have been limited in scope.

Two important issues that should be addressed during the needs assessment are the development of a K-adult continuum for distance education and the needs of Saskatchewan's Aboriginal peoples.

Presently, a variety of agencies are involved in the delivery of distance education to students of different ages. K-8 distance education is provided by the Saskatchewan Government Correspondence School through a cooperative arrangement with the Correspondence and Distance Learning Branch of the British Columbia Ministry of Education. Distance education for grades 9 to 12 is delivered by the Saskatchewan Government Correspondence School. Several post-secondary educational institutions deliver programs to adults through distance education. When considering the K-adult continuum, the needs assessment might ask questions such as these: Should the

Saskatchewan Government Correspondence School deliver K-8 distance education directly? Can students move smoothly from one level of distance education to another? Is there appropriate coordination of distance education programs at all levels?

It is important that the needs of Saskatchewan's Aboriginal people be addressed during the needs assessment. In order to do this, those conducting the needs assessment must obtain input from relevant groups and individuals. These should include Indian and Metis leaders, Indian and Metis-controlled post-secondary institutions, Band-controlled K-12 schools, and Band councils. All of these groups may have distance education needs. It is important that Aboriginal groups be consulted directly to determine their distance education needs.

Recommendation #3

It is recommended that the Correspondence School, in consultation with the other educational partners, based on the results of the needs assessment, take a leadership role in ongoing strategic planning for K-12 distance education in Saskatchewan. Authority for decision-making should rest with Saskatchewan Education after appropriate consultations with educational organizations, and delivery agencies such as SaskTel and the Saskatchewan Communications Network (SCN).

The comprehensive needs assessment suggested in Recommendation #2 will provide a solid foundation for long-term planning of K-12 distance education services to individuals and organizations. Long-term planning has a number of advantages. It would:

- allow the Correspondence School to guarantee that certain courses would be offered for specific periods of time or that certain new courses would be available on specific dates.
- allow boards of education to commit themselves to programs and courses via correspondence because they would have reliable information about service.
- allow the phase-in of new technologies for the delivery of distance education programs.

Recommendation #4

It is recommended that the Correspondence School, in collaboration with Saskatchewan Education and SCN, develop a long-term acquisition plan for non-print material to enhance print-based courses.

A few Correspondence School courses such as Typewriting presently include videocassettes and the six new courses scheduled for development during the 92/93 school year will include a video component. Video can greatly enhance courses delivered through distance education. It makes a course more interesting and relevant and can be used to illustrate processes and procedures that are difficult to describe in writing. Video has an advantage over interactive television because students can watch it at a time and place of their choosing. They can play the program as many times as necessary and stop and start it to make notes or review whenever they want.

It may be appropriate to produce video programs specially for some distance education courses. However, many excellent programs already exist. Some of those may well be suitable for use with particular courses. The task is to identify them, acquire them along with broadcast and/or duplication rights, and arrange for duplication of copies.

The videotapes acquired may be used for broadcast under some circumstances. SCN's services can be used to deliver the video component of courses as well as to broadcast live productions.

In some situations, it will be appropriate to produce or acquire other types of non-print media in addition to video. Audiocassettes and slides presently accompany some courses and it is likely that use of these simple, low-cost media will increase in the future. Use of computer diskettes will also probably increase in the future.

Recommendation #5

It is recommended that the Correspondence School, in collaboration with interested schools and agencies, develop a long-term plan for the delivery of courses enhanced by interactive television and broadcast on SCN.

Although print materials will probably be central to the delivery of most distance education courses in the foreseeable future, these materials can be greatly enhanced through the use of audiotapes, videotapes, slides and other visuals, teleconferences and interactive television programming.

Interactive television is a medium with a great deal of educational potential. During a typical interactive session, those students participating in the session gather at the same place at the same time and watch a live television presentation. A special telephone hook-up allows them to phone in comments and questions and engage in two-way conversations with presenters. Thus, it has immediacy and personal interaction, two elements that contribute to learning.

Interactive television programming delivered through SCN is a complex method of delivery because of the sophisticated technology involved and the need for precise scheduling. As well, appropriate program materials must be acquired or produced. A long-term plan would ensure that interactive television programming and broadcasts on SCN are used to the best possible advantage. Identification of the courses that would most effectively be enhanced through this technology would be fundamental to such a plan. The plan might also address liaison with SCN and define processes for working with schools that might participate in the production and/or receipt of courses.

ORGANIZATION

Recommendation #6

It is recommended that the name of the Saskatchewan Government Correspondence School be changed to more accurately reflect the nature of the School's activities.

Written materials – "correspondence lessons" – were once the sole method used to deliver K-12 distance education in Saskatchewan. This is no longer the case. A whole range of contemporary technologies are used. Moreover, the same course might be delivered in a variety of ways depending upon the needs of the students (or student group) and the situation.

It is likely that the methods used to deliver distance education programs will change in the years ahead as new technologies are developed.

Changing the name of the Correspondence School to something like "Distance Education Saskatchewan" would emphasize the distance education aspects of the School's program rather than the method used to deliver that program.

The Correspondence School's placement within Saskatchewan Education's organizational structure should allow it to retain a field focus and close links with curriculum and instruction. K-12 distance education's status as a major initiative of the Government of Saskatchewan should be reflected by the Correspondence School's positioning within Saskatchewan Education.

Recommendation #7

It is recommended that the Correspondence School, school divisions and consortia of school divisions form innovative partnerships to provide increased access to quality learning opportunities for K-12 distance education learners throughout the province.

There is tremendous potential for local involvement and for cooperation between organizations in the delivery of K-12 distance education in Saskatchewan.

This potential will probably increase in the years ahead as further consolidation of schools and school boards occurs and larger administrative units develop. As well, it is probable that school divisions will form consortia for specific projects and programs in order to achieve economies of scale. Such consortia might facilitate the delivery of distance education programs because they would make large-scale cooperative projects possible. A typical cooperative project might involve the Correspondence School contributing course design, local schools providing in-class instructors, consortia of school divisions providing the technology to receive programming locally, SCN providing the technology to deliver programming to local schools and Saskatchewan Education and SCN jointly providing video materials. The Correspondence School, with its increasing experience in the delivery of distance education through cooperative projects, can provide an organizational framework as well as contributing course design and instruction.

Recommendation #8

It is recommended that distance education be used to support the needs of learners, not infrastructures which may no longer be viable.

The focus of the Correspondence School has always been the individual learner. The focus of the school is to help learners realize their objectives. These objectives usually relate to educational or career goals, but sometimes also relate to personal self-development. This is as it should be, for the mandate of the School relates specifically to education.

However, in recent years the School has sometimes been seen as fulfilling a role for which it was not originally intended. Some small schools with low high school enrolments and only a few teachers teaching high school subjects rely heavily upon distance education to provide students with both required courses and electives. The Correspondence School is, in effect, providing a service that allows the local school to remain open. The Correspondence School's program was not designed for this purpose and its funding structure does not facilitate it being used in this way. The educational needs of the individual learner should remain the Correspondence School's primary emphasis.

Recommendation #9

It is recommended that a collaborative project be undertaken involving the Correspondence School, the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST) and regional colleges to explore program delivery and student support systems enabling adults to participate in secondary distance education.

The courses offered by distance education through the Correspondence School are fully recognized by the province's two universities and by SIAST and therefore may be an option to adults seeking entry to post-secondary programs. Specific grade 12 courses are required for entry into most university/SIAST programs. For example, Physics 30, Chemistry 30 and/or Biology 30 are required for entry into most science programs. Credit in a second language may be necessary for some other programs.

There is potential for a cooperative project involving the Correspondence School, SIAST and the regional colleges. Adult upgrading students taking specific courses through the Correspondence School would receive secondary level credits. The Correspondence School might work with SIAST and the regional colleges in a manner similar to the way it presently works with Loreburn Central High School. Students registered with the Correspondence School would receive instruction from their teacher at the School. Instructors at SIAST and regional colleges would provide supplementary assistance and enrichment. Participation by Saskatchewan Education and post-secondary institutions during the planning of such a cooperative project would ensure that all organizations affected would have input.

Recommendation #10

It is recommended that the Correspondence School develop and implement an appropriate staffing plan in order to ensure adequate and effective delivery of K-12 distance education.

In order to function effectively the Correspondence School requires teachers, other professional staff and administrative staff.

The quality of distance education, like the quality of education delivered through other means, depends heavily on the teachers involved. The teacher/student ratio must be low enough so that each student receives the individualized, personalized attention that she or he needs to understand the subject material and to remain interested and enthusiastic about studying. Teachers at the Correspondence School typically write or audiotape long messages to their students and may phone them. They are available to answer students' phone calls on the toll-free telephone line and to meet with students when they come to the School. These are all time-consuming processes. Course development is time consuming as well, and when a teacher is developing a new course, responsibilities within the school must be shifted or a temporary teacher hired to assume that teacher's instructional responsibilities. Teachers must be highly knowledgeable in their subject areas in order to provide students with the instructional support they need and to write courses that adequately explain the course content.

Other professional staff members required includes computer programmers and analysts.

Professional staff members that may be needed in the future include:

- instructional designers to assist subject experts in designing courses for distance delivery
- counsellors to provide career counselling and to assist students with personal problems that may be interfering with their ability to do their course work
- staff with expertise in appropriate adult education methodology, given the significant numbers of adult students enrolled in correspondence courses
- school and community liaison officers to provide potential clients, boards of education, parents and others with information about distance education.

The Correspondence School needs staff to handle its administrative responsibilities. A tremendous volume of mail goes in and out. Lesson materials must be printed, stored and distributed. Audio and videocassettes must be duplicated, stored and distributed. Because the School has almost 6,000 students, maintaining student records requires a considerable amount of time and energy. All of these tasks are essential to the operation of the School.

The Correspondence School has unique characteristics that affect staffing. Those characteristics influence the need for both professional and administrative staff. For example, there is continuous intake of students. Students can start at any time of the school year, not just at the beginning of year or a semester. There is unlimited enrolment. Subject enrolments may change from year to year or even from month to month. This year, there may be high enrolment in a particular subject and so more teachers are required for that subject. Next year, enrolment in that subject may be down, but enrolment may be up in another subject.

FINANCE

Recommendation #11

It is recommended that Saskatchewan Education, in consultation with its educational partners, review tuition fee structures for K-12 distance education courses and make recommendations to meet demands identified through the Correspondence School's regular planning cycle.

The Saskatchewan Government Correspondence School's expenses include staff salaries, printing of lesson materials, costs associated with course development such as purchase of the rights to use copyright materials, the purchase of duplication and broadcast rights for audiovisual productions, and operational costs such as phone, fax and computer charges.

The school is financed through a revolving fund. Money received from sale of course materials, registrations, tuitions and supplementary exams is used to cover expenses. The goal is that the School should be self-sustaining in terms of cash flow. Becoming self-sustaining means generating more revenue, reducing expenditures or both.

There are several approaches to generating revenue. One is to tap new markets for the services of the Saskatchewan Government Correspondence School. Presently, legislation restricts the school's operation to the province of Saskatchewan. However, there may be potential markets beyond our borders, for example, in the American border states, in Hong Kong where many students wish to raise their educational levels so that they can enter Canadian universities and in countries such as Ukraine where many students want to learn English. If students outside the province were served by the Correspondence School, the fees they would be charged would almost certainly be higher than the fees charged Saskatchewan residents.

Regardless of whether these new markets are tapped, there is a need to examine the School's fee structure. Presently, students who are under 21 and are attending a school are charged \$327.00 per full credit course. In most cases, the local school division pays some or all of this cost which is then reimbursed by Saskatchewan Education.

Adult students - individuals who are 21 or over or who are 16-20 but not attending school - are charged \$90.05. Saskatchewan Education provides a grant to the Correspondence School to make up for the difference between school-aged and adult fees. The fees for both adult and school-aged students will almost certainly need to be increased in the years ahead in order to keep pace with inflation.

Some courses cost much more than others to develop. For example those that include a videotape or a slide kit cost more to develop than those based solely on print. Delivery costs vary also. It is more expensive to deliver a course via interactive television or other technologically sophisticated methods than through print alone. For these reasons, there may be merit in examining the concept of differentiated tuition fees which reflect developmental costs as well as the increasing costs of multimedia delivery.

Recommendation #12

It is recommended that, based on the needs determined through ongoing research, the Correspondence School continue to receive adequate funding.

The goal is that the Correspondence School should generate enough revenue to allow it to meet all of its expenses. This, then, becomes a balancing act where revenues can be influenced by enrolment, tuition fees, adult subsidies, etc. and expenses influenced by staffing, program activities, administration, etc.

From time to time nonroutine demands are made on the School's budget. Five current nonroutine demands are discussed below.

- To adequately fulfill its mandate the Correspondence School should conduct ongoing research. Needs of existing and potential client groups should be regularly assessed. Distance education projects in other provinces and other countries should be studied to determine their applicability to the Saskatchewan situation.
- Technology is increasingly being used to deliver distance education. Additional funds are needed for the identification, purchase and installation of appropriate technologies. As well, funds may be needed to develop programs that train students, Correspondence School teachers and local teachers in the use of these technologies.
- The implementation of CORE Curriculum has put a tremendous strain on the Correspondence School's course development capability. The CORE Implementation Plan specifies that most provincial courses in the seven Required Areas of Study be rewritten in the near future. Ideally, companion distance education courses should be developed at the same pace. Because of staff and budget limitations this is not happening. As well, the Common Essential Learnings must be integrated into existing courses.
- The School's computer capabilities should be increased. For at least the past decade computers have been recognized as a valuable educational tool. They are particularly

relevant to distance education because they can transmit information instantly regardless of distance. They also provide a means of interpersonal communication that has advantages over both the telephone and the written word. Most local schools now have computers and so have the capability to participate in distance education programs delivered via this medium. Presently, computers are not used at all for instructional purposes at the Correspondence School (except for Computer Literacy classes), simply because the budget does not allow for the purchase of equipment, the development and/or purchase of appropriate software and the creation of appropriate linkages with schools. As a result, tremendous educational opportunities are yet to be realized.

A very basic computerized system is used to store student records. However, its capabilities are limited. A more sophisticated system could issue receipts and permit the creation of profiles of the student body according to criteria such as location, age, gender, previous schooling, etc.

When teachers engaged in course development type their course directly into the computer instead of writing it out in longhand on paper, one step is saved. As well, revisions are easier. Unfortunately, the Correspondence School has a limited number of terminals and so some teachers are forced to write their courses out for typing later by a secretary. More terminals are badly needed.

- Audiotapes and videotapes are important components of many of the Correspondence School's courses. These technologies, along with computer software, are likely to become even more important in the years ahead. When the Correspondence School buys a videotape, audiotape or computer software package for distribution to students or broadcast, it also buys the distribution and/or broadcast rights as required. Purchase of these rights ensures that the Correspondence School is conforming to copyright legislation and that distribution and/or broadcast is taking place with the knowledge and permission of the copyright owner. Typically, distribution and/or broadcast rights are between 10 and 1,000 times the price of the basic item.

As noted previously, students who are under 21 and are attending school are charged \$327.00 per full course. In most cases, the local school board pays some or all of this cost. They are, in turn, reimbursed by Saskatchewan Education. Therefore, the amount of revenue that the Correspondence School receives from its instruction of school-aged students is directly related to the number of students served.

This is only partially the case for adult students. Most adult students (those 21 or over and those 16 or over who are not attending school) pay their own fees so the fee charged is lower - \$90.05 per course. Saskatchewan Education provides a grant to partially make up the difference. This grant is a specific amount of money; it is not tied to adult student enrolment. If the number of adult students increases, it is necessary to hire more teachers to handle the workload and administrative tasks associated with mailing, record-keeping,

etc.; yet the amount of the grant doesn't increase to cover these additional costs. A grant that was directly tied to the number of adult students would be preferable, because it would keep pace with costs associated with increased enrolments.

PROGRAMMING

Recommendation #13

It is recommended that development of K-12 distance education be done in concert with Saskatchewan Education's curriculum and instructional development.

Saskatchewan Education is currently in the midst of implementing CORE Curriculum. A long-term implementation plan has been developed and courses are developed and piloted according to this predetermined schedule. Ideally, development of new distance education courses by the Correspondence School should keep pace with Saskatchewan Education's curriculum development. When a new course is available for use in the schools, it should also be available to those individuals studying through distance education. When funds are made available to Saskatchewan Education to develop new courses, funds should also be available to transform those courses into distance education courses. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Staff limitations and budget restrictions have caused the development of new courses by the Correspondence School to fall behind Saskatchewan Education's long-term CORE Curriculum implementation plan.

It is critically important that Correspondence School courses be developed in concert with curriculum produced by the Curriculum and Instruction Branch of Saskatchewan Education. A large number of teachers throughout the province use these courses as professional reference materials or as the basis for classroom instruction (Type B service). Of equal importance are the students who register directly with the Correspondence School. Their instruction should be as up-to-date as that provided in any classroom in the province.

Course development in many subject areas can profitably be done in cooperation with other provinces. The different provincial curricula may prevent distance education schools across Canada from simply exchanging courses. However, modification and adaptation of courses developed elsewhere can save time, money and energy. The Saskatchewan Government Correspondence School's Calculus course is a case in point. This course is the product of a collaboration between Saskatchewan and Alberta.

The appropriate placement of the Correspondence School within Saskatchewan Education's organizational structure needs consideration. It is imperative that the School have ready access to Saskatchewan Education's Executive Committee while retaining a field focus and close links with curriculum and instruction. K-12 distance education is a major initiative of the Government of Saskatchewan. The importance of this initiative should be reflected in the Correspondence School's positioning within Saskatchewan Education.

Recommendation #14

It is recommended that the Correspondence School continue ongoing evaluation of K-12 distance education courses in order to ensure their quality and effectiveness.

Presently all distance education courses delivered by the Correspondence School are subject to a number of evaluation procedures. While a course is being developed, drafts are reviewed by teachers in the school and outside subject specialists and appropriate revisions made. The first year that a course is used in the field is considered a pilot year. Students and teachers using the course are asked to fill out detailed evaluation forms. Some users may be contacted in person to further discuss the course. Following the pilot year, the course is usually revised to reflect comments received from users. There is ongoing evaluation as well. Students who complete a course are asked to fill out a form evaluating the course. This evaluation process is important. It helps the School assess the quality and effectiveness of its courses and provides guidance for future course development.

Recommendation #15

It is recommended that as the Correspondence School conducts its ongoing evaluation, determinations be made concerning the implementation of media/technology enhancements for improvements to quality.

Most courses can be enhanced through inclusion of a media component, but the nature of that component varies from one course to another. Language courses, for example, are best supplemented with audiotapes or with an interactive technology such as teletutoring or interactive television so that students and teacher can talk to each other. Videotapes are useful in courses where processes must be illustrated such as Physics, Biology, Typewriting or Commercial Art.

Within a particular course, some portions can be delivered adequately through print, while other portions are made clearer and more interesting through the use of a media component. Feedback from students and teachers who use Correspondence School courses can provide guidance for the use of media to enhance instruction.

Some of the technologies that might be used to support distance learning are presently available in many schools and homes and may be underutilized.

A survey of directors of education showed that in 1990-91 there were 12,565 microcomputers in Saskatchewan schools.

The same survey showed that 62 school divisions have cable television hook-up. Thirty-six of these have one cable drop in the school; 15 have two or three rooms wired for cable; eight have every room wired for cable and three did not indicate the location of the cable hook-up. Twenty-two school divisions have a Ku-Band satellite dish and six have a C-Band dish.⁶

A 1991 survey of off-campus university and SIAST students asked about access to various types of technology. Although off-campus university and SIAST students may differ somewhat from adult students of the Correspondence School, this survey nevertheless provides useful information. It showed that 76% of off-campus university students have access to a video recorder outside the classroom. As well, 46% and 41% respectively have access to a computer and a cable connection outside the classroom. Only 9% have a modem.

The same survey showed that 71% of off-campus SIAST students have access to video recorders outside the classroom. Approximately one-third of students have access to a computer and cable connection outside the classroom, 33% and 35% respectively. Only 5% have modems.⁷

Interactive video, using Picture Tel technology, is another medium that has potential for delivering distance education. SaskTel and the Eston-Elrose School Division are currently cooperating in a pilot project using this technology. Picture Tel allows for spontaneous student-teacher interaction. It is like a video conference where all participants can see each other and talk to each other at the same time. The system uses sophisticated technology to send video signals as well as voice signals over telephone lines.

In the future, as access to technology increases, there may be a need to conduct regular reviews in order to determine the most appropriate media to convey the subject content of various courses. It is possible that for some courses such as languages, the predominant media might be other than print and print would be the enhancement. There may also be a need in both the present and the future to balance the advantages of new technologies with their cost. The development of networks and consortia would help considerably to make new technologies affordable.

⁶ Directors of education survey results: 1990-91. (1991). Regina: Saskatchewan Education.

⁷ 1991 Off-campus student survey results. (1991). Regina: Saskatchewan Education.

Recommendation #16

It is recommended that the Correspondence School ensures its programs are developed with sufficient flexibility in delivery modes so as to meet the needs of students and the unfolding needs of the K-12 education system in Saskatchewan.

The needs of boards of education offering courses through distance education and of individuals pursuing their education in this way vary. Thus, no single method of delivery is appropriate for all K-12 distance education clients. For example, a major advantage of interactive television is that it allows students and teacher to talk to each other. Because programs delivered through interactive television are broadcast via narrowcast television network to specific sites around the province, this method of delivery requires that all students be together in one or more locations at the same time. This can be an advantage. It allows students to talk together and to learn from each other. It can also be a disadvantage. Some students have work or family responsibilities and cannot commit themselves to attending a regularly scheduled class outside of their home. They need a program they can complete in their own space and on their own time.

The structure of Saskatchewan's educational system may change in the years ahead. This creates the potential for new partnerships between users of distance education and new methods of delivery.

COMMUNICATION

Recommendation #17

It is recommended that the Correspondence School undertake an ongoing program of public awareness to increase appreciation of distance education as a viable alternative for acquiring K-12 credentials.

Recommendation #18

It is recommended that Saskatchewan Education take a leadership role with the other educational partners in increasing public awareness of K-12 distance education as a means of providing equal access to quality learning opportunities throughout the province.

Traditionally, the Correspondence School has not advertised its services. Recently, a very modest public awareness program was initiated. Advertisements describing the school and some of the courses offered were placed in major Saskatchewan newspapers at the beginning of the 1991/92 school term. It is possible that some educational institutions and individuals that might profitably use the services of the school are unaware of its existence or unaware of the range of courses offered.

There is a need for a very specialized public awareness program. Some schools and school boards are unaware of the way that the Correspondence School can work with teachers in their school to deliver quality educational programming. They would welcome information about the type of cooperative projects that now exist and about new options that might be possible. When sophisticated technology is involved they want to know how the technology works and what the cost and service implications will be. This type of information is best provided by an individual who meets with school administrators and school boards prior to their involvement in a distance education project. When school officials are given information during the planning stages of a project, they can make informed decisions and ensure that the distance education programs they initiate are designed with their particular situation in mind.

Recommendation #19

It is recommended that the teacher education programs at Saskatchewan's teacher education institutions include treatment of the principles and practices of distance education.

During their preservice education, Saskatchewan's future teachers require an introduction to distance education strategies so that they might collaborate effectively with the Correspondence School when they become practicing teachers. Their education should:

- make them aware of distance education issues.
- provide them with information about current distance education initiatives in the province.
- prepare them to critically analyze their own roles and the roles of their students in the distance education process.
- give them opportunities to practice skills in delivery and development of distance education courses.

Distance education might be an appropriate inservice topic for practicing teachers as well. In addition to receiving academic information on distance education, teachers might meet with their peers who are participating in school or school division projects and view such projects in action.

FACILITY

Recommendation #20

It is recommended that a more appropriate facility be provided for the Correspondence School in order to make its operation more effective and efficient. This facility should support the unique status of the Correspondence School in its form and function.

The Correspondence School requires a facility in which to operate. Because there is only one such school in Saskatchewan, there are no provincial standards that can be applied to its design. The design of the Correspondence School's facility should flow from its unique characteristics. Some of these characteristics include:

- teachers who usually work alone, but who also might work in small groups with their colleagues or in one-to-one situations with students.
- teachers who regularly devote their full attention to course design for periods of several months.
- a situation in which both course design and regular instruction involve the use of technology. These range from the very basic (audiotape) to the highly complex (interactive television).
- a situation in which the telephone is one of the main means of communication with students.
- a large volume of administrative work including shipping and receiving, maintaining student records and arranging for printing of materials.
- the need for considerable storage space to house print and nonprint course materials and various types of audiovisual hardware.
- the need for ready access to a wide range of human and physical resources.

Chapter 4

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Recommendation #21

It is recommended that Saskatchewan Education implement the recommendations in this report as soon as possible and that it appoint an Implementation Advisory Committee to assist in this process.

The Implementation Advisory Committee might be made up of appropriate representation from:

- the Indian/Metis Community
- the League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents
- the regional college system
- the Saskatchewan Communications Network (SCN)
- the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST)
- the Saskatchewan Federation of Home and School Associations
- the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association
- the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation
- the universities.

Representatives from other emerging delivery agencies may be added as appropriate.

The members of the Implementation Advisory Committee should be selected so that all geographic areas of the province, including the North, are represented.

The Implementation Advisory Committee would be advisory to Saskatchewan Education. Therefore, Saskatchewan Education would establish its terms of reference. Its mandate might include advising Saskatchewan Education on how those recommendations accepted by the Minister are to be implemented. It might also interpret the recommendations in

light of shifting educational, social and economic contexts. For example, consolidation of schools and school boards, and changes in the mandates of educational organizations and delivery agencies might mean a reanalysis of some of the recommendations.

The life of the Implementation Advisory Committee would be determined by Saskatchewan Education. It might be an ongoing committee charged with the responsibility of advising Saskatchewan Education on K-12 distance education policy or its life might be limited to the time needed to implement the recommendations in this report.

Saskatchewan Education's first tasks should be to establish the Implementation Advisory Committee addressed in Recommendation #21 and to undertake the province-wide needs assessment addressed in Recommendation #2 of this report. The needs assessment should be comprehensive and thorough. Those conducting it should take the initiative to seek out and talk to present and potential users of distance education in order to explain the services available and to get users' input. Although questionnaires and requests for submissions might be part of the needs assessment, they should not be the only research strategies used.

The needs assessment will present a snapshot of present and potential distance education clients, educational institutions and delivery agencies as they are at a particular point in time. It should be the beginning of an ongoing, regular assessment of K-12 distance education needs in this province.

Saskatchewan Education, of course, should identify the key issues to be addressed during the needs assessment, but it need not assume full responsibility for administration of the assessment. This province has three research units that have been established to carry out precisely this sort of task - the Saskatchewan Professional Development Unit, the Saskatchewan Educational Leadership Unit and the Saskatchewan Instructional Development and Research Unit. All three of these organizations operate on a fee for service basis and have extensive experience with educational research.

After the Implementation Advisory Committee has been appointed and the needs assessment initiated, the other 19 recommendations in this report should be categorized into those recommendations that can be acted upon immediately and those that will be dependent upon the results of the needs assessment. For example, Recommendations #11 and #6 could be acted upon immediately. Recommendations #3 and #7 might be, at least partially, dependent upon the results of the needs assessment. Those recommendations which can be acted upon immediately should be addressed forthwith.

As soon as the results of the needs assessment are known, the other recommendations should be prioritized and an action plan for their implementation should be developed. While this plan is being developed, other initiatives underway in the area of education should be considered. For example, a committee has been established to review the

implementation of CORE Curriculum. The Distance Education Program Review Committee is focusing on the distance education needs of the post-secondary sector. An action plan that reflects these other initiatives as well as directly addressing the 21 recommendations of the Minister's Advisory Committee on K-12 Distance Education will ensure that distance education is delivered to all existing and potential clients in a coordinated manner.

It is often said that in the future the only certainty is change. Demographic, lifestyle and economic changes, and advances in transportation and communication mean that people's lives are becoming more complex all the time. The needs of individuals, families and communities are growing more diverse. These ongoing changes in society mean that no single method of delivering education will adequately serve all learners. Educational systems need to be flexible because individual learner's circumstances differ greatly. They need to make their programs more accessible in order to serve all of those individuals who might benefit from them. For this reason, it is important that all delivery mediums be fully explored and that we do not prematurely wed ourselves to limiting technology options. Emerging developments in technology must occur in concert with pedagogical developments which recognize the centrality of teacher-learner interaction.

Distance education is both flexible and adaptable and for this reason it has great promise for the future. The potential for using distance education to deliver high-quality cost-effective educational programs has barely been tapped in this province. In the future K-12 distance education will continue to serve the people it does now - students whose course requirements don't coincide with the school timetable, students who need courses not offered by their school, and adults who wish to upgrade their education. But it may serve other individuals and groups as well. Distance education may have a valuable role to play in many high school programs because its structure encourages students to set learning goals for themselves, to organize their own time, and to set priorities. In short, it encourages students to become self-directed lifelong learners.

Presently, most adults completing high school through distance education are working alone. This may not be the case in the future. In the future, groups of adult students taking courses through distance education might work together. Distance education may be used by post-secondary institutions in the same structured way that it is now used by many high schools. It may allow post secondary institutions to provide the high school prerequisites that students need for acceptance into specific courses. Community and cultural groups who recognize that some of their adult members want to upgrade their education might organize distance education study groups in which learners tutor, support and encourage each other. Finally, distance education might be delivered to clients beyond Saskatchewan's borders. People in the American border states, English as a Second Language learners in countries such as Ukraine, and Asian students who wish to upgrade their educational levels are all possible new clients.

In the future, technology will make distance education even more flexible and adaptable than it is now. Existing technology will become more sophisticated and will give the user greater access to data and allow more interaction with others than is presently the case. For example, in the years ahead, learners may be able to participate in interactive television programs right in their homes. Textbooks and resource materials may play a less central role in distance education courses as they are enhanced by computerized databases. Indeed, the computer can be very useful in distance education because it allows large quantities of data to be transmitted long distances instantly. It also allows people who are geographically distant from each other to communicate easily with each other. In some subjects, it has advantages over the telephone. Mathematical formulas and scientific drawings can easily be displayed visually via computer but are difficult to explain over the telephone.

New technologies are being developed every day and some of these will be useful for delivery of distance education. Picture Tel, virtual reality and libraries of resource materials on CD-ROM all have obvious usefulness for both distance and classroom instruction. Indeed, this is part of the potential of distance education. It can be delivered to more people, can be used in more situations, and can be more immediate and more interactive as the technology grows. No one knows for sure what distance education will be like ten years from now, because no one can fully anticipate the technology that will be available to deliver it.

Distance education is a method of delivering educational programs that has great possibilities for the future. Used in conjunction with existing structures, it can give school-aged and adult learners a learning experience with more richness and more depth and it can make education available to individuals and groups who previously had limited access. Enhancing distance education in Saskatchewan obviously would benefit those individuals and groups who study through this medium. It would benefit the province as a whole, as well. When community and cultural groups raise their educational levels and when a wider range of educational opportunities are available to the residents of this province, everyone wins.